

You Can Help Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

A child may be helpless, but you are not. Here are the five "R's" of preventing child abuse and neglect:

Remember the Risk Factors

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- Seem to be having economic, housing or personal problems.
- Are isolated from their families or communities.
- Have difficulty controlling anger or stress.
- Are dealing with physical or mental health issues.
- Had a painful childhood. Adults who were mistreated as children may unintentionally continue the pattern of abuse with their own children. They have no models of successful family relationships from which to learn.
- Abuse alcohol or drugs.
- Are inexperienced with children or have unrealistic expectations of what a child can do.



Recognize the warning signs:

The behavior of children may signal abuse or neglect long before any change in physical appearance. Some of the signs may include:

- Nervousness around adults.
- Aggression toward adults or other children.
- Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods.
- Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities.
- Knowledge about sex that is unusual for the child's age or stage of development.
- Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Poor hygiene or dress that is inappropriate for the weather.

Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect:

Call the department of social services in the community where the child lives or where the abuse occurred. Ask for child protective services. If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police. Virginia maintains a 24-hour hotline for questions about reporting child abuse and neglect:

Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline
1-800-552-7096 (voice/TTY)

More ➔

Raise the Issue:

By educating yourself and others you can help your community prevent child abuse and neglect from happening in the first place.

- Call 1-800-CHILDREN for information that you can photocopy and post in your workplace, apartment building, library, laundromat, place of worship, school, beauty parlor or supermarket.
- Contact your school district, library or faith group about support programs for parents and how you can help. If none exist, encourage them to sponsor or develop resources for parents.
- Call or write your elected officials and ask them to advocate for parent support and child abuse prevention programs. Check our website, www.preventchildabuseva.org/advocacy.htm, to find your legislator or send a message.



Reach Out:

Anything you do to support kids and parents can help reduce the stress that often leads to abuse and neglect.

- Be a friend to a parent or a child you know. Show them you care.
- Talk to your neighbors about looking out for one another's children. Show that you are involved.
- Help relieve the financial stress of parenting by donating or lending used clothing, furniture or toys.
- Volunteer your time and money for programs in your community that support children and families.



This April, wear a blue ribbon to show you care about the welfare of children and families. For information or advice about how you can prevent child abuse and neglect, call:



Prevent Child Abuse
Virginia

1-800-CHILDREN

